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AUTHOR	Fago, David P.; Sedlacek, William E.
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ABSTRACT

This study compares the attitudes of transfer students toward drugs with those of freshmen. An anonymous poll was administered to 170 new freshmen. Results indicate that transfer students had tried speed, mescaline, LSD, DMT, cocaine, wine and liquor more often than freshmen, and that transfers tend to be more regular useres of marijuana, cocaine, beer, wine and liquor than freshmen. Both freshmen and transfers tend to use drugs more to get high and feel good, but freshmen are more apt to use them to be more friendly and sociable. The most frequent reasons for non-use of drugs were similar for freshmen and transfers: no desire to experience its effects, and reports (or experience) of harmful psychological effects. Transfer students take a more favorable stand on the legalization of all drugs, but a harder stand against the use and selling of drugs other than marijuana than do freshmen. Transfers are also less apt to go the University Counseling Center for help with a drug-related problem. Type of school formerly attended by transfers did not correlate with their use of drugs. Users of some drugs were more highly intra-correlated than uses of others. (Author)

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Summary

Since the number of transfer students is increasing in American education and so little is known about them as a group, this study compared their attitudes and behavior toward drugs with those of freshmen. An anonymous poll was administered to 170 new transfer students and 761 new freshmen. Results indicated that transfer students had tried speed, mescaline, LSD, DMT, cocaine, wine and liquor more often than freshmen, and transfers tend to be more regular users of marijuana, cocaine, beer, wine and liquor than freshmen. Both freshmen and transfers tend to use drugs to "get high and feel good" but freshmen are more apt to use them to be more friendly and sociable. The most frequent reasons for non-use of drugs were similar for freshmen and transfers: "no desire to experience its effects" and "reports (or experiences) of harmful psychological effects." Transfer students take a more favorable stand on the legalization of all drugs, but a harder stand against the use and selling of drugs other than marijuana than do freshmen. Transfers are also less apt to go to the University Counseling Center for help with a drug related problem. Type of school formerly attended by transfers did not correlate with their use of drugs. Use of some drugs were related to one another more than others. For instance, marijuana use correlated most with hashish use, and downs and speed correlated most with one another as did beer, wine and liquor use.

Several recent studies have noted a changing pattern in various populations' attitudes and behavior toward drug use (McKenzie, 1970; Berg, 1970; Edison, 1970; Fago & Sedlacek, 1973). For example, drugs that were once used predominantly by students are now becoming increasingly more common to the blue-collar work force (Kahn, 1973). Students' tastes on the other hand have reportedly begun to shift away from the psychedelic drugs popularized during the sixties to more traditional substances such as alcohol and barbiturates (Fort, 1972; Fago & Sedlacek, 1973). Califronia's recent marijuana referendum (November, 1972), while unsuccessful in terms of legalizing the use of marijuana, seems demonstrative of a growing change in the public's attitude toward drugs.

The dynamic nature of the "drug phenomenon" has stimulated a series of studies at the University of Maryland on student attitudes and behavior toward drugs (McKenzie, 1970; Horowitz & Sedlacek, 1973; Fago & Sedlacek, 1973). A prevailing concern of these investigations has been the attitudes and behavior of incoming students - in particular, how they compared with the existing student community and with entering students from previous years. The present study focuses on a somewhat different incoming group: transfer students. Of particular interest are the points of similarity and difference between the experiences and attitudes of new transfer students and new freshmen.

Transfer students represent one of the largest growing groups in higher education, about which relatively little is known. Most studies have centered on the academic achievement and attrition of two year junior college students who have transferred to four year institutions. Some studies provide evidence that transfers do at least as well academically as do native students (Martorana & Williams, 1954; Hoyt, 1960) while other studies reveal that natives perform better (Klitzke, 1961; Medsker, 1960; Lindsay, Marks & Hamel, 1966). Transfer students have also been found to have a significantly higher rate of attrition (Lindsay, Marks & Hamel, 1966). Although little work has been done on the personality characteristics of transfer students, at least one study (Rose & Elton, 1970) suggests that transfer students are basically a homogeneous group that differs very little from regular students. Wrenn(1967), concluded that "transfers are freshmen in every sense of the word except for two more years of general maturity and some additional academic content gathered elsewhere".

Method

An anonymous questionnaire developed to assess students' attitudes and behavior related to thirteen drugs was administered to 170 new transfer students at the University of Maryland during spring registration, 1973. Students in this sample came from two year community and junior colleges (48%), state colleges and universities (29%), private colleges and universities (18%), and sectarian liberal arts colleges (2%). A comparison group consisting of 761 freshmen had been administered the original poll during summer and fall registration, 1972. Both samples consisted of approximately equal numbers of males and females.

Data Analyses

Comparisons of attitudes and frequency of use by type of student (freshman and transfer) were made using F. Frequency of drug use and attitude items were intercorrelated for transfer students using Pearson correlation. Finally, the relationship between frequency of drug use and type of school formerly attended was analyzed using Eta. Per cent responses were tabulated for type of school formerly attended, frequency of drug use, and reasons for use and non-use of drugs.

Results

Incidence of Use: Table 1 presents the indicence of use of thirteen drugs for freshmen and transfer students. Incidence is defined as the percentage of subjects who report ever having used a specific drug. The data indicate that every drug except wine and cigarettes has been tried by a higher percentage of transfer students. Several F tests indicated that transfer students have tried speed, mescaline, LSD, DMT, cocaine, wine, and liquor significantly more often than have freshmen (.05 level). In both samples the drugs that had been tried by the most subjects were beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, marijuana, and hashish.

Regular Use: Table 2 presents the percentage of freshmen and transfer students reporting regular use (at least once a month) of each of the thirteen drugs. In contrast to Table 1, an equal or greater percentage of freshmen are regular users of hashish, speed, downs, mescaline, LSD, DMT, and heroin. On the other hand, a slightly larger percentage of transfer students regularly use marijuana and cocaine, and a considerably larger percentage of transfer students regularly use beer, wine, and liquor.

Reasons for Use and Non-Use: Tables 3 and 4 present rankings of the most frequently given reasons for freshmen and transfer students' use and non-use of drugs. The evidence suggests that freshmen and transfer students have similar reasons for both using (to "get high, feel good") and not using ("no desire to experience effects") drugs. Freshmen however tend to use drugs more to be more friendly, loving and to enhance sociability.

Attitudes: Table 5 presents means and standard deviations for each of the attitudinal items for both freshmen and transfer students. The data suggest that transfer students take a significantly more favorable stand on the legalization of all drugs, but a harder stand against the use and selling of drugs other than marijuana, and against going to the counseling center for help with drug-related problems (F - .05 level).

Intercorrelations: The correlational data indicate that the type of school formerly attended by transfers has little to do with either attitude or behavior toward drugs. Intercorrelations between the use of different drugs were in most cases significant for both freshmen and transfers. Some of the correlations for the groups combined were as follows: marijuana correlated highest with hashish (r = .81) and lowest

with heroin (r = .22); wine (r = .20), liquor (r = .16), and cigarettes (r = .25); downs and speed correlated highest with one another (r = .63); cigarettes correlated highest with speed (r = .31); beer, wine, and liquor were most highly correlated with one another (r's from .40 to .54).

Discussion

From the data on incidence of drug use it would seem that transfer students, having more college experience than freshmen and being older, have had more time to experiment with drugs. In this respect at least, transfer students seem to be more similar to upperclassmen than to incoming freshmen (Horowitz & Sedlacek, 1973). While a higher percentage of transfer students have tried nearly every drug, a comparable or even greater percentage of freshmen are now regular users of these drugs. This turn-about is consistent for all drugs except marijuana, cocaine, and alcoholic beverages. For beer, wine, and liquor this reversal appears to have occurred almost in the opposite direction. While a slightly larger percentage of transfer students have tried beer, wine, and liquor, a substantially larger percentage of transfer students are regular users of alcohol. This is particularly the case in the instance of hard liquor. These results would seem, then, to add further evidence for hypothesized changing trends in drug use. However, it appears that this trend is not a unitary occurrence; it seems that the age and/or experience of the drug user can have an important moderating influence. It seems that as the drug user becomes older and/or more experienced in the use of drugs, the trend is to desist in the use of psychedelic and narcotic substances, to continue smoking marijuana, and to begin more regular drinking of alcohol, particularly hard liquor. The variables behind this trend are as yet unclear, although, as was stated, age and experience may well be the most important. In connection with age, one important point may be the greater accessibility of alcohol after one reaches the legal age for purchasing alcoholic beverages. Biggs, Orcutt and Bakkenist (1974) found that students tend to view use of alcohol as appropriate in a greater variety of settings than they do the use of marijuana. Additionally, use of marijuana tends to conflict with parental expectations while use of alcohol does not. Both Biggs et al. (1974) and Wardell and Mehra (1974) found that marijuana users were more irreligious and unconventional as compared to alcohol users or nonusers of drugs.

In terms of their attitudes toward drug use, freshmen and transfer students do not appear to be substantially different. Consequently, it does not appear that the differences found in freshmen and transfer students' use of drugs are attributable to attitudinal differences. However, one attitudinal difference worth noting is the significantly greater reluctance among transfers to go to the University Counseling Center with drug-related problems. It might be well to investigate whether this reticence among transfer students applies to other student services as well. If transfer students are, in fact, less inclined to make use of student services, then perhaps a more concerted effort should be made to reach this population.

The evidence also suggests that students do not use different drugs for different reasons. Regardless of the particular substance they happen to be using, it seems that with drugs students are looking for and apparently finding an enjoyable experiences that affords them relief from the more negative aspects of their lives.

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Table 1

Incidence of Drug Use*

	Marij.	Hash	Speed	Downs	Mesc.	LSD	DMT	Cocaine	Heroin	Beer	Wine	Liquor	Cigar.
Freshmen	47%	34%	15%	16%	12%	9%	4%	6%	2%	85%	90%	75%	60%
Transfer	57%	38%	28%	18%	18%	18%	12%	13%	6%	88%	91%	85%	52%

* Incidence = have ever used.

Table 2

Incidence of Regular* Drug Use

Freshmen	28%	16%	3%	5%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	51%	50%	33%	29%
	30%	16%	3%	3%	1%	0.5%	0%	2%	0.5%	58%	63%	60%	29%

*Regular = once a month or more.

Table 3

Most Frequent Reasons for Use of Drugs

Item	Ranked by Freshmen	Ranked by Transfers
To get high, feel good	1	1
To be more friendly, enhance sociability, and/or be more loving	2	4
Experience things more vividly	4	3
Relieve general anxiety, tension, nervousness, and/or irritability	3	2

Table 4

Most Frequent Reasons for Non-Use of Drugs

Item	Ranked by Freshmen	Ranked by Transfers
No desire to experience its effects	1	1
Reports (or experiences) of harmful psychological effects	2	2
Observations of effects on others	3	4
Illegality	4	3

Ranks: 1 = Most frequent; 4 = least frequent reason.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitudinal Items

Item	Freshmen Mean*	Freshmen SD	Transfers Mean	Transfers SD
Marijuana should be legalized	2.44	1.32	2.37	1.37
All drugs should be legalized	4.53**	0.81	4.33	0.95
If I were aware of someone USING MARIJUANA I would report them to the proper authorities	4.36	0.84	4.24	0.99
If I were aware of someone USING OTHER DRUGS I would report them to the proper authorities	4.03**	1.02	3.83	1.12
If I were aware of someone SELLING MARIJUANA I would report them to the proper authorities	3.72	1.30	3.69	1.31
If I were aware of someone SELLING OTHER DRUGS I would report them to the proper authorities	3.24**	1.34	2.97	1.39
I would NOT attend a drug education program on campus	3.31	1.16	3.16	1.09
A drug counseling service should be provided for students	1.59	0.83	1.67	0.80
The Student Government Association should fund a drug counseling center	2.21	1.02	2.37	1.03
I DO NOT feel sorry for people on drugs	3.37	1.21	3.36	1.21
If the university has knowledge of a student USING MARIJUANA they should turn him over to the proper authorities	3.93	1.11	3.84	1.20
If the university has knowledge of a student USING OTHER DRUGS they should turn him over to the proper authorities	3.40	1.24	3.37	1.30
If the university has knowledge of a student SELLING MARIJUANA they should turn him over to the proper authorities	3.22	1.38	3.33	1.36

Item	Freshmen Mean*	Freshmen SD	Transfers Mean	Transfers SD
If the university has knowledge of a student SELLING OTHER DRUGS they should turn him over to the proper authorities	2.53	1.36	2.63	1.31
If I were using drugs and felt a need for counseling, I would go to the University Counseling Center	2.08**	1.00	2.41	1.02

* 1 = Strongly Agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree
** Mean differences significant at .05 using F.